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### The Alvarado Rain Pools

Fresh water ponds are none too plentiful in California. To find pools within easy reach of the bay cities and near a good road which is not too frequented by passing automobiles seems to me a real bonanza. So we have made it a practice to stop at the Alvarado Pools whenever we drive down to our week-end cabin in the Santa Cruz Mountains during the wet season. This year, 1942, this wet season has been longer than usual so that the ten-minute stops have netted an extra long list of species. No doubt longer stops with excursions into the pastures that border the pools would bring still greater rewards.

Our first visit after the heavy rains of late January was on February 8. We left Foothill Boulevard at Valle Vista and stopped where the road turns south toward the Holly Sugar Plant. There was a great expanse of water and thousands of shore birds were taking advantage of this opportunity for resting and feeding. I noted Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, Willets, Godwits, Sandpipers, and Dowitchers. Also many coots, gulls, and ducks. Puget Sound Sparrows were singing and feeding in the weeds by the roadside, and two Yellowthroats were heard in the tules. Meadowlarks and Song Sparrows were announcing spring and Redwings were everywhere.

On February 14 Semi-palmated Plovers were an added attraction; on February 22 Pintails in number and a Yellow-legs (between two Willets) small enough to suggest that it might be a Lesser. On February 28 the water was temporarily lower and Spoonbills were the most abundant ducks present. On March 21 Green-winged Teal had assembled in the channel at the south end of the main pool. Many were feeding with head and tail submerged and only the middle of the back above water. Avocets were abundant and almost all were in breeding plumage. Other ducks and shore birds as during February. Cliff Swallows were noted for the first time.

On April 11 there was a ground fog which limited the field of vision but in the shallow water next to the road was a Black-necked Stilt daintily threading its way among the submerged weeds. Several pairs of Cinnamon Teal had come in and settled in the nearest pond. On the return trip the next day, in a wet field across the road from the Sugar Factory, (rain Apr. 8, 9, 10) there were 78 Hudsonian Curlews and 18 Dowitchers, most of them bathing. After we had watched them for some time we tried to make them fly but they paid no attention to our noises or to our movements on the roadway.

At the regular pools with no fog to blot out the distance, we counted 20 Avocets and 8 Stilts. Shore birds and ducks had decreased. Black-bellied Plovers were in full breeding plumage. In the weeds beside the road the Puget Sound Sparrows were gone but a flock of Gambels had taken their place and with them were two Lark Sparrows.

There was so much rain the following week that when we passed on April 18 everything was under water and the Burrowing Owls had taken refuge on the fence posts. A kingfisher seemed to think that so much water

must mean good fishing. Ducks were less abundant. Avocets and Red-backed Sandpipers were in full plumage. On April 26 we found two Stilts; Avocets seemed to be in pairs; Dowitchers were chasing each other instead of foraging in close flocks. Coots were much reduced in numbers. This was the last date when Spoonbills were seen.

On May 6, I recorded several Cinnamon Teal, a few coots, a few Sandpipers, and Killdeer. On May 24 many of the pools had dried up and the ground was covered with the beautiful California Lobelia which continued to spread from pool to pool as conditions changed from open water to boggy soil. This exhibit lasted for a full month, thanks to the rains of mid-May. When we stopped on May 24 we were greeted by protests from Killdeer, Avocets, and a Stilt — almost a Los Banos greeting. Two Cinnamon Teal, three Pintails, and a Mallard, all males, made us wonder if they had mates on nests in the offing. On May 30 there was very little water except in the main channel where the tules grow. But in this channel was a gorgeous male American Merganser with a group of Cinnamon Teal, and a pair of Stilts put on a good show. On June 13 even the farthest pools were blue with lobelia and Killdeer were the only birds to protest against us, but I could discern in the distance both Avocets and Stilts.

On June 25 the lobelia had gone to seed, but away to the west I could hear a suspicious yipping. It became more and more distinct and a Stilt flew directly over our heads to the tules across the road and back again and off westward, yipping all the way. On July 3 much of the area that had been under water was being plowed and the Killdeer, the Redwings which had nested in the tules, the Cliff Swallows and the Barn Swallows nesting under the bridges, and the Meadowlarks were left to themselves. On July 12 the season closed with an Anthony Green Heron flying about the tules and finally alighting on a fence post where he stayed until we had said our farewell until 1943.

—Amelia Sanborn Allen, Berkeley, California.

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### A Hermit Warbler Family

Before this year one of my ornithological ambitions had been to see closely a Hermit Warbler (*Dendroica occidentalis*). I had often heard its song in the tops of gigantic pine trees but doubted if one ever stooped so low as to permit a good look. This summer, however, at Camp Augusta, three miles from Nevada City, on June 21, Mary Fran Degnan and I took a hike. We started at six a.m. and had not gone 200 yards when we saw a beautiful male Hermit Warbler in some young pines and willows. We watched him for a while, located his mate, and observed that they were feeding their gray babies. On a nearby branch sat a big lethargic brown bird with darker stripes on his breast. All it did was sit and squawk. I could not imagine what it was. Finally the little Hermit Warblers came and fed it. It was a Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*), twice the size of the Hermits. From that time the warblers spent about half the time feeding their own two babies and half the time feeding the big brown squawker.

I had an ambition fulfilled and an exciting hike before I started.

—Ariel Reynolds, Piedmont, California.

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### An Active Hobby

Through the courtesy of Miss Werner comes this interesting letter from Mr. Richard Chaney, a young Berkeley student volunteering in a governmental service. Birds are just a hobby with Mr. Chaney but apparently they have become a great source of enjoyment in the far away places where other forms of recreation are scarce. The letter was sent from "Station X", on April 15, 1942.

"Perhaps the family has told you that I've been down here in the south seas since the end of January. Although the place has many drawbacks, it is extremely interesting from the standpoint of natural history. The birds are really good. Those that we see commonly are frigates, boobies, white terns, sooty terns, noddy terns, bristle-thighed curlews, Pacific golden plovers, turnstones, sanderlings, and red-tailed tropic birds. There are also several other

species of terns that I've not identified, for lack of a book, and there are three species of the booby. Nearly all of the above species nest here and I've run across a good many rookeries in the course of the work.

Probably the most interesting nesting sites are those of the frigate bird. They are placed under an updraft so that the birds can take off easily, and in the mornings and evenings thousands of them spiral up to several thousand feet and look very much like a cyclone from a distance. The frigate bird is one of the most adept of the soaring types, and I've heard that they have the least weight per wing area of any bird. The male birds have a bright red membranous pouch on their throat which can be inflated to an almost unbelievable size. It is a strange sight to see them flying with this thing dangling underneath.

Perhaps you have read of the red-tailed tropic bird. Up until now it has been quite rare on the island. The numbers are increasing now, as the birds come in to nest. I have found eggs recently, and have seen many birds on the ground. In its mating procedure the male and female bird fly backwards towards each other for considerable distances. In doing so they use their feet to steer, as well as their long red tails, which they flip about from side to side. The tail consists of two feathers, which are highly prized by the local boys for their hats. The birds are easily caught when on the ground, and as a result, many of them are plucked.

The fish life of the island is very interesting and abundant. I've done some diving around coral reefs, using a pearl-diver's mask, and have been able to see quite a few different species of colored fish, and many interesting coral formations."

We hope other young people far afield will follow Mr. Chaney's example and send accounts of their bird observations.

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### July Field Trip

The July field trip was taken to the East Bay Regional Park on the 12th. The party consisting of four members and one guest started from Ascot and Skyline, followed the rim trail to the Redwood Bowl, then dropped down through the redwoods to the canyon floor, and finally climbed up to Skyland Gate and took the trail back again to starting point. The day was perfect and although only twenty-six species of birds were observed, individuals were plentiful. Purple finches, wren-tits, spotted towhees, and russet-backed thrushes sang a good part of the time. Creepers were abundant and on one occasion their song was heard. A western flycatcher flew from a nest containing three eggs. This nest was built inside of the Church in the Wildwood.

Plants added much to the pleasure of the trip. *Holodiscus discolor* (cream bush) covered many slopes with its feathery panicles, a few yellow calochortus were still in bloom, godetias were scattered all through the dry grasses, sticky monkey flowers added much color, and among the redwoods the brilliant shiny berries of *aetaea spicata* (baneberry) were a source of delight.

On the way home Mr. Leffler drove us to Skyline and Manzanita Drive where we wandered among fine specimens of manzanita and chinquapin, listening to wren-tits and having splendid views of Mt. Diablo. Continuing along Grizzly Peak Boulevard and Claremont Avenue we examined the concorted strata of Miocene cherts and shales.

The following birds were seen on this trip:

Quail	Wren-tit	Black-headed Grosbeak
Mourning Dove	Bewick Wren	Purple Finch
Downy Woodpecker	California Thrasher	House Finch
Western Flycatcher	Russet-backed Thrush	Green-backed Goldfinch
Crested Jay	Hutton Vireo	Spotted Towhee
California Jay	Warbling Vireo	Brown Towhee
Bush-tit	Lutescent Warbler	Junco
Red-breasted Nuthatch	Macgillivray Warbler	Song Sparrow
Creeper	Pileolated Warbler	

Members attending were Misses Barry and Webb, Mrs. Kelly and Mr. Leffler.

—Junea W. Kelly, Leader and Historian.  
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### Audubon Notes

**August Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 13th, at 8 p.m. in the Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Dr. Alden H. Miller, Director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology of the University of California, will be the speaker of the evening, his subject being "Afield in Mono County".

Members may bring guests.

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**August Field Trip** will be taken on Sunday, the 16th, to Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. Members and friends will meet at 10th Ave. and Fulton St. at 9 a.m. Those coming by street car should take No. 5 (McAllister) car or Municipal "B" car, transferring at Geary and 10th Ave. to the Municipal Bus to Fulton St. and Golden Gate Park. We will proceed thence to the Chain of Lakes and elsewhere, under the direction of the leader, Mr. Arthur H. Myer. Bring binoculars and luncheon.

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**July Meeting:** The 298th regular meeting was held on the 9th in the Assembly Room of the San Francisco Public Library, President Mrs. Harold C. Austin presided.

Mr. C. A. Harwell, California Representative of the National Audubon Society, gave an interesting and instructive account of the birds found

on the desert from the Imperial Valley to Palm Springs. Mr. Harwell sketched a map of the region, explaining the larger topographic features and showing how the configuration of the region made it a natural migratory flyway. He supplied everybody with an Audubon Daily Field Card of Birds occurring in the Pacific States, so that the birds mentioned might be checked. Colored slides of plants and flowers supplied the setting.

Under the heading of "Books", Mr. Harwell played on a phonograph one of the Albert R. Brand records from the new volume "American Bird Songs". Thus the wren-tit and Nuttall sparrow were brought to the audience. Mrs. Kelly called attention to "Wings at my Window" by Ada Clapham Govan and "Under the Sea-wind" by Rachel L. Carson. These books are refreshing at this time and help one's philosophy of life.

The following observations were reported:

Female Wood Duck with seven young, Hoover Ranch; five pairs of Pigeon Guillemots nesting along the Santa Cruz Drive — June 28. Mrs. Harold C. Austin.

Heermann Gulls, Cliff House, July 9, Mrs. Junea W. Kelly.

The following have been elected to membership: Miss Joan Kirk, Oakland, and Miss May E. Barry, San Francisco.

## Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

### For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....	Mrs. Harold C. Austin.....	541 Boulevard Way, Piedmont
Corresponding Secretary.....	Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....	519 California St., San Francisco
Treasurer.....	Miss Ivander MacIver.....	2414 Telegraph Ave., Berkeley
Editor.....	Mrs. T. Eric Reynolds.....	140 Estates Drive, Piedmont

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 p.m.

Assembly Room, San Francisco Public Library, Larkin and McAllister Streets, San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.